

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 ARAE-00 ACDA-05 MC-02 OMB-01 EB-07

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USIA-06 ERDA-05 ERDE-00 IO-11 DLOS-04 EUR-12 AF-06

SAM-01 /118 W

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FM AMEMBASSY BRASILIA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 3575

INFO AMEMBASSY BOGOTA

AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES

AMEMBASSY CARACAS

AMEMBASSY TEGUCIGALPA

AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA

AMEMBASSY LA PAZ

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AMEMBASSY MANAGUA

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 BRASILIA 0760

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MARR, PFOR, BR

SUBJECT: BRAZIL AND CONVENTIONAL ARMS RESTRAINTS

REF: STATE 15423

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SUMMARY PROSPECTS ARE UNPROMISING FOR SERIOUS BRAZILIAN SUPPORT FOR REGIONAL ARMS LIMITATION, CHIEFLY BECAUSE OF BRAZIL'S RELUCTANCE TO COMMIT ITSELF TO FORMULAS THAT WOULD FREEZE STATUS QUO OR FORECLOSE IMPORTANT OPTIONS FOR IT IN ITS MARCH TOWARD GREAT POWER STATUS. SINCE THIS RELUCTANCE IS DETERMINED AS MUCH BY INTERNAL BRAZILIAN POLITICAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL FACTORS AS BY BRAZIL'S ASSESSMENT OF EXTERNAL THREAT OR FUTURE SECURITY NEEDS, U.S. INITIATIVES SUCH AS SECURITY GUARANTEE WOULD BE ONLY LIMITED INDUCEMENT. WHILE DEVELOPMENT OF STRONG CONSENSUS AMONG OTHER LATIN AMERICAN STATES IN FAVOR OF LIMITATIONS WOULD BE HARD FOR BRAZIL TO IGNORE, U.S. LEAD ON REGIONAL ARMS RESTRAINT WOULD PROBABLY BE RECEIVED HERE WITH SKEPTICISM. END SUMMARY.

FROM VANTAGE POINT OF BRAZIL, WE AGREE WITH REFTEL THAT PROSPECTS FOR RESTRAINT SEEM UNPROMISING. FOLLOWING ARE OUR COMMENTS KEYED TO POINTS ONE TO FIVE IN REFTEL.

1. FACTORS NOW FAVORING RESTRAINT ARE BY AND LARGE SHORT-RUN, ECONOMIC CONSIDERATIONS. BECAUSE OF UNCERTAIN ECONOMIC CONDITIONS AND BALANCE-OF-PAYMENT STRAINS, BRAZIL CURRENTLY UNWILLING TO INCREASE SHARPLY ITS DOMESTIC OR FOREIGN PROCUREMENT. EXPECTED MILITARY SALARY INCREASES AND SHARP RISE IN FUEL AND OTHER SUPPORT COSTS HAVE CUT INTO FUNDS AVAILABLE TO MILITARY FOR MAJOR PURCHASES OF HARDWARE. TIGHT IMPORT RESTRICTIONS RESPONDING TO SERIOUS BALANCE-OF-PAYMENTS DEFICITS WILL PROBABLY CONTINUE LIMITING BRAZIL'S FOREIGN PURCHASES FOR AT LEAST NEXT TWO YEARS. THERE MAY ALSO BE SOME TAPERING OFF OF FOREIGN PROCUREMENT AS BRAZIL ATTEMPTS TO SWITCH OVER TO LOCAL PRODUCTION OF MORE ITEMS DURING NEXT TWO-FIVE YEARS. ON STRICTLY POLITICAL SIDE, INTERNAL TURMOIL WITHIN ARGENTINA HAS REDUCED SOMEWHAT FOR THE MOMENT THREAT TRADITIONALLY PERCEIVED FROM THAT QUARTER IN BRAZILIAN MILITARY CIRCLES. BUT EMERGENCE OF RADICAL, MILITANT GOVERNMENT IN ARGENTINA, AS A RESULT OF CURRENT TURNOIL, WOULD SERVICE AS JUSTIFICATION IN SAME QUARTERS FOR BRAZILIAN BUILD-UP, AS WOULD SIGNIFICANT DETERIORATION OF ARGENTINE INTERNAL SECURITY. WHILE BRAZIL INTENT ON ITS QUEST FOR GREAT-POWER STATUS AND HAS CLEAR AIMS TO INCREASE ITS INFLUENCE AMONG SMALLER ADJOINING BUFFER STATES, AT SAME TIME IT HAS LONG PLACED HIGH VALUE ON PRESERVING RELATIONSHIP WITH ITS LATIN AMERICAN NEIGHBORS THAT WILL BE ACCEPTED AS REASONABLE AND NON-CONFIDENTIAL

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PROVOCATIVE. BRAZIL IS SENSITIVE TO SUGGESTION IN SOME LATIN AMERICAN CIRCLES THAT IT PURSUES OR INTENDS TO PURSUE HEGEMONIAL, AGGRESSIVELY EXPANSIONIST ROLE IN AREA. SIMILARLY, BRAZIL HAS GIVEN HIGH PRIORITY TO SOLIDARITY WITH REST OF LATINS AND CAUTION IN FOLLOWING POLICIES THAT MIGHT TEND TO ISOLATE HER. BRAZIL'S CAUTION IN ITS BILATERAL RELATIONS WITH ITS NEIGHBORS ANN IN REGIONAL FORA IN PART REPRESENTS ITS DESIRE NOT TO BE SEEN AS THROWING

ITS WEIGHT AROUND. ASSUMING THESE ATTITUDES PERSIST,
BROAD AND FIRM CONSENSUS AMONG REST OF LATIN STATES
ON CONVENTIONAL
ARMS LIMITATION, IF SUCH ACHIEVABLE, WOULD
BE DIFFICULT FOR BRAZIL TO IGNORE COMPLETELY. BY SAME
TOKEN, HOWEVER, BRAZIL WOULD BE MOST UNLIKELY TO TAKE LEAD.

2. OBSTACLES TO REGIONAL ARMS RESTRAINTS. PRINCIPAL
OBSTACLE REMAINS BRAZIL'S SENSE OF ITS DESTINY TO BE A
GREAT POWER AND THE CONCOMITANT UNWILLINGNESS TO ACCEPT
LIMITATIONS WHICH IT SEES AS INCOMPATIBLE WITH GREAT
POWER STATUS. MINDFUL OF ITS SHEER SIZE AND WEIGHT AND ITS
RAPID INDUSTRIALIZATION, BRAZIL HAS SENSE OF AUTONOMY,
SELF-RELIANCE, AND WORLD-WIDE OUTLOOK, POSSIBLY LACKING
IN MANY OF SMALLER LATIN AMERICAN COUNTRIES. BRAZILIANS
INCLINED TO FEEL THAT ARMED FORCES EVEN NOW, IN TERMS OF
NUMBERS AND MODERNNESS OF THEIR EQUIPMENT, ARE ALREADY INADEQUATE TO
COUNTRY OF BRAZIL'S SIZE AND PRESENT IMPORTANCE, MUCH LESS
IMPORTANCE THAT BRAZIL ASSUMES IT WILL HAVE WITHIN 5 TO 20
YEARS. BRAZILIAN NON-ADHERENCE TO NPT, WHICH IT REGARDS AS
SUPER POWER ATTEMPT TO FREEZE THE STATUS QUO AND TO PERPETUATE
FIRST AND SECOND CLASS CATEGORIES OF POWER, WOULD HAVE
PARALLEL IN BRAZILIAN RESPONSE TO ANY CONVENTIONAL DISARMAMENT
PROPOSALS SPONSORED BY US. FOR REASONS OF NATIONAL POWER AND ECONOMIC
GAIN, BRAZIL INTENDS TO DEVELOP ITS DOMESTIC ARMS INDUSTRIES.
THEIR SUCCESSFUL AND RATIONAL DEVELOPMENT WILL REQUIRE A LEVEL
OF DEMAND THAT WILL PERMIT THEM TO PRODUCE ON ECONOMIC SCALE.
WHILE INCREASING AND IMPROVING EQUIPMENT OF BRAZILIAN FORCES
WILL BE PRIMARY PURPOSE OF DOMESTIC PRODUCTION, WE BELIEVE
BRAZILIANS ULTIMATELY WILL COUNT HEAVILY ON EXPORT MARKET,
PARTICULARLY AMONG SMALLER LATIN NEIGHBORS, AND WOULD ACCORDINGLY
RESIST EFFORTS AT REGIONAL CONVENTIONAL ARMS LIMITATIONS.

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3. INTERNATIONAL CONSIDERATIONS WHICH WILL WORK AGAINST
BRAZILIAN COOPERATION IN ARMS LIMITATIONS WILL BE, IN THE
LONGER RANGE, CONTINUED CONCERN THAT ARGENTINE MILITARY DEVELOPMENT,
AGGRAVATED BY FEAR OF LEFTWARD LURCH IN ARGENTINE INTERNAL
POLITICS. (WHILE THERE IS SOME EVIDENCE THAT SPECTER OF ARGENTINE
THREAT IS AT TIMES EXAGGERATED AS A BUDGETARY DEVICE BY SOME
MILITARY LEADERS, IT IS NONETHELESS A FACTOR IN OVERALL BRAZILIAN
ATTITUDE.) TWO INTERRELATED FACTORS ARE BRAZIL'S NEED TO MAKE
EFFECTIVE ITS CLAIM TO SOVEREIGNTY OVER 200-MILE TERRITORIAL
SEA AND, NAVY'S INTEREST IN POSSIBLE SOUTH ATLANTIC ROLE INTENSIFIED
VERY RECENTLY BY CONCERN OVER GROWING SOVIET PRESENCE
IN ANGOLA AND SOUTH ATLANTIC, BOTH OF WHICH ARE POTENTIAL
INDUCEMENTS FOR MILITARY BUILD-UP, OVER TIME, PARTICULARLY NAVAL AND
AIR ARMS.

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FM AMEMBASSY BRASILIA

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INFO AMEMBASSY BOGOTA

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 BRASILIA 0760

4. WE CAN FORESEE NO SUB-REGIONAL APPROACHES THAT WOULD BE COMPELLINGLY ATTRACTIVE TO BRAZIL, WHICH JUDGES ITS ARMS NEEDS MORE AS A PROSPECTIVE WORLD POWER RATHER THAN AS A REGIONAL ACTOR. AS NOTED PREVIOUSLY, PROFESSED NEAR OF ARGENTINE RIVALRY IS AS MUCH INTERNAL BUDGETARY DEVICE AS GENUINELY
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PERCEIVED THREAT. THEREFORE, UNDERSTANDING ON LIMITATIONS WITH ARGENTINA WOULD PROBABLY BE DESIRABLE TO BRAZILIANS ONLY IF AGREED CEILINGS WERE SO HIGH AS TO BE OF LIMITED VALUE IN TERMS OF PRACTICAL ARMS LIMITATIONS.

5. WE EXPECT THAT THE BRAZILIANS WOULD BE CAPTIOUS ABOUT ANY U.S. LEAD IN REGIONAL ARMS RESTRAINT, UNLESS IT INVOLVED VERY SUBSTANTIAL AND EXEMPLARY CONVENTIONAL ARMS REDUCTIONS BY THE U.S. ITSELF. MOST PROBABLE REACTION WOULD BE TO VIEW SUCH PROPOSALS BY THE U.S. AS AN EFFORT TO FREEZE BRAZIL INTO A PERMANENT SECOND-CLASS ARMS STATUS, FORECLOSING AN IMPORTANT AVENUE TOWARD ITS PRESUMED DESTINY TO BE A GREAT POWER. AS BRAZIL DEVELOPS INTERNAL ARMAMENTS INDUSTRY, WITH SURPLUS FOR EXPORT, BRAZILIANS COULD BE INCLINED TO VIEW U.S. INITIATIVES POSSIBLY AS COMMERCIALY MOTIVATED ATTEMPT TO BLOCK BRAZILIAN PENETRATION INTO TRADITIONAL CONVENTIONAL ARMS MARKETS OF U.S. AND OTHER DEVELOPED COUNTRIES.

6. WHILE OUR IMPRESSION IS THAT MOST RESTRAINT AGREEMENTS WOULD BE NON-FEASIBLE FOR BRAZIL IN THE LONGER RUN, IN SHORT RUN TWO POSSIBLE OPTIONS THAT COULD HAVE SOME POSSIBILITIES WOULD BE "NON-ACQUISITION" AND ESTABLISHMENT OF CEILINGS. WITH REGARD TO THE FORMER, BRAZIL MIGHT BE WILLING TO COMMIT ITSELF NOT TO ACQUIRE HIGHLY SOPHISTICATED EQUIPMENT FOR WHICH IT IS NOT YET READY, OR CANNOT YET AFFORD, OR FOR WHICH IT DOES NOT YET HAVE HIGH PRIORITY STRATEGIC NEED. HERE AGAIN, SUCH NON-ACQUISITION COMMITMENTS WOULD PROBABLY BE ACCEPTED FOR RELATIVELY BRIEF AND CAREFULLY DEFINED PERIODS, SINCE AN OPEN-ENDED COMMITMENT, WHILE POSSIBLY ENTAILING NO SUBSTANTIVE SACRIFICE, WOULD STILL HAVE NEGATIVE DOMESTIC POLITICAL IMPLICATIONS OF SIGNING AWAY OF POSSIBLE OPTIONS. PROPOSALS OF CEILINGS MIGHT RECEIVE CONSIDERATION BY BRAZIL IF THEY WERE PROPERLY LIMITED IN DURATION AND IF THEY WERE SET HIGH ENOUGH ABOVE BRAZIL'S EXISTING FORCE LEVELS TO ALLOW CONSIDERABLE MARGIN FOR EXPECTED EXPANSION AND TO BE CONSISTENT WITH BRAZIL'S IMAGE OF ITSELF AS AN EMERGING POWER. THE PRACTICAL VALUE OF OVERALL REGIONAL ARMS LIMITATIONS OF NON-ACQUISITION PLEDGES OR CEILINGS LIMITATIONS ENTERED INTO BY BRAZIL UNDER FOREGOING CONDITIONS WOULD, OF COURSE, BE LIMITED.

7. IN VIEW OF THESE GENERALLY UNPROMISING PROSPECTS, IT IS
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DIFFICULT TO SPECULATE ON PRE-CONDITIONS OR ON WHAT U.S. SHOULD DO, SINCE MUCH OF IMPETUS FOR BRAZILIAN ARMS AMBITIONS COME AS

MUCH FROM INTERNAL POLITICAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL FACTORS AS FROM EXTERNAL CONSIDERATIONS. MOREOVER, WE SEE NO INTERNAL POLITICAL CHANGES, SUCH AS RETURN TO CIVILIAN RULE, AS LIKELY TO HAVE MUCH EFFECT ON THOSE FACTORS. AS STATED EARLIER, IF REST OF LATIN AMERICA DEVELOPS STRONG COMMITMENT TO CONVENTIONAL ARMS LIMITATION, THIS COULD INFLUENCE BRAZILIAN ATTITUDE, DEPENDING OF COURSE ON ITS PERCEPTION AT THE TIME OF THE SEVERITY OF THREAT TO IT FROM OUTSIDE THE REGION (SUCH AS SOUTH ATLANTIC).

8. U.S. SECURITY GUARANTEE LIKELY TO HAVE LITTLE EFFECT IN CONDITIONING BRAZILIANS TO ACCEPT CONVENTIONAL RESTRAINTS FOR SAME REASON NUCLEAR GUARANTEE FAILED TO STIMULATE BRAZILIAN ADHERENCE TO NPT. FUNDAMENTALLY, BRAZIL SEES ITS ULTIMATE PLACE AS AMONG THE GUARANTORS--AT LEAST OF ITS OWN SECURITY--RATHER THAN THOSE STATES THAT ARE GUARANTEED.

9. WE SHOULD RECOGNIZE THAT A CONTRIBUTING FACTOR TO BRAZILIAN ATTITUDE TOWARD ARMS HAS BEEN IMPORTANCE WHICH U.S. ITSELF ATTRIBUTES TO MILITARY ASPECT OF ITS RELATIONSHIP WITH BRAZIL, BOTH BILATERALLY AND IN MULTILATERAL FORA. SINCE ALLIANCE OF WORLD WAR II MILITARY COOPERATION HAS LOOMED LARGE IN TOTAL CONTEXT OF U.S.-BRAZILIAN RELATIONS, REINFORCING THOSE TENDENCIES ALREADY PRESENT IN GOVERNMENT AND PUBLIC OPINION FAVORING ACTIVE BRAZILIAN MILITARY ROLE AND EQUIPMENT AND FORCE STRUCTURE NECESSARY TO GIVE IT CREDIBILITY. INDEED, QUESTION MAY BE ASKED WHETHER SUM TOTAL OF OUR PERVASIVE AND VARIED MILITARY RELATIONSHIP (ORIENTATION TOURS, IADB, MILITARY MISSIONS, TRAINING IN U.S., JOINT EXERCISES, AND INSTITUTIONALIZED MILITARY CONTACTS) WILL INEVITABLY WHET APPETITES AND AMBITIONS MORE THAN IT CAN ENCOURAGE RESTRAINT.

10. FINALLY, ONE POSSIBLE APPROACH MIGHT BE MORE CONTROLS ON REGION'S ACCESS TO ARMS OR ARMS TECHNOLOGY. TO MODERNIZE AND EXPAND ITS FORCES, BRAZIL MUST EITHER BUY ABROAD OR BUILD AT HOME. A CAREFULLY DRAWN UNDERSTANDING AMONG U.S. AND OTHER MAJOR SUPPLIER COUNTRIES OF MODERN ARMAMENTS AND ARMS TECHNOLOGY PROHIBITING TRANSFER OF SOPHISTICATED ARMS OR TECHNOLOGY TO REGION WOULD FACE BRAZIL WITH CHOICE OF EITHER ACCEPTING

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DEFACTO LIMITATIONS OR STRIVING FOR ARMS AUTARKY AT COSTS THEY WOULD PROBABLY FIND UNACCEPTABLE. THIS APPROACH, HOWEVER, WOULD PENALIZE LESS INDUSTRIALIZED STATES OF REGION RELATIVELY MORE IN MILITARY TERMS, WOULD LEAVE BRAZIL WITH ADVANTAGE IN PRODUCTION OF RELATIVELY SIMPLE ARMAMENTS, AND WOULD BE EXCEEDINGLY DIFFICULT TO BRING ABOUT OR TO ENFORCE OVER THE LONG RUN.
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